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Summary of *Three Cups of Tea*

After reading *Three Cups of Tea*, written by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, I gained a greater insight of the Pakistani culture and how one man was able to immerse himself into a culture in order to empower its people. The novel is about Greg Mortenson, an American mountain climber, who changes his path from climber to educational advocate for women and children who up until his arrival were denied access to any sort of educational programs. Although this novel is more story oriented than most of the books we have discussed this quarter, it brings up some of real life occurrences that take place when doing business in another country.

Mortenson’s journey begins with a mission to reach the summit of the second tallest mountain, K2, in order to honor his sister’s death. He is unable to make it to the summit, and upon descent, Mortenson looses his group and ends up in an isolated village called Korphe. The people of this remote village take Mortenson in and nurse him back to health. Though he is disappointed in his failure to reach the summit of K2, he finds a new purpose to honor his sister’s death and that is to build the village of Korphe a school.

One of the first people Mortenson meets in his quest through Pakistan is Haji Ali. This elder teaches many lessons to Greg and makes sure that he becomes family with the Korphe village before any actual building takes place. Haji Ali says, " The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family, and for our family, we are prepared to do anything, even die. Doctor Greg, you must take time to share three cups of tea.” Haji Ali allowed Mortenson the opportunity to learn some of the key elements which defined the culture of their village. One of the main reasons, in my opinion, that Mortenson was so successful in his efforts in development has to do with the time he spent getting to know and understand the culture.

Mortenson starts his project without any funds. Through passing along his goals to fellow climbers and coworkers (he works as a nurse in San Francisco) he comes across a man named Jean Hoerni. Jean becomes his benefactor and ends up giving him 1 million dollars after his death to fund Mortenson’s many projects to come. They name their non profit organization the Central Asia Institute and according to their website they have “supported over 300 community initiated educational and service projects.” (https://www.ikat.org/)

It was interesting to read the book first and then do some research afterwards to find that several of his stories were made up. Though I do believe that there is no doubt that Mortenson has made a serious impact on the development in Pakistan, I have come to question the mans overall integrity when discovering that some of the most important and defining stories in his book were falsified.